DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 121 EC 303 932

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TITLE Teaching Diverse Learners in Inclusive Settings: Steps for Adapting Instruction.

PUB DATE 7 Apr 95

NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (73rd, Indianapolis, IN, April 5-9, 1995).

PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inclusive Schools; Instructional Design; Learning Activities; Mainstreaming; *Special Needs Students; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Ways to adapt instruction for students with diverse learning needs in inclusive settings are suggested. Strategies and accommodations for students with learning differences are proposed concerning: the learning environment, learning procedures, progress measurement, instructional methods and materials, and classroom management techniques. Specific accommodations address student seating and space considerations, time allowed for students to process information and complete learning tasks, the daily schedule and student's expected work rate, modifications to testing and grading, class and homework assignments, study groups, course organizers, modifying learning objectives and adapting texts, varying teaching and learning methods and modes of student response, assistive technology, adaptations of visual and oral materials and methods, and various classroom techniques to provide structure and support. Accommodations are suggested for each of the following content areas: reading, mathematics, writing, and science/social studies. The paper includes an instructional accommodations planning sheet, an instructional inventory to assess student-teacher fit, and a materials analysis inventory. (SW)

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TEACHING DIVERSE LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS: STEPS FOR ADAPTING INSTRUCTION

A Paper Presented at the
Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention
Indianapolis, Indiana
April 7, 1995

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TEACHING DIVERSE LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS: STEPS FOR ADAPTING INSTRUCTION

Laura L. Mohr, Ed.D.

Effective instruction for students with learning differences requires the consideration of three components in the educational process: the teacher, the student, and instructional accommodations. An understanding of these components and the appropriate application of teaching and learning styles and strategies can ensure success in inclusive settings for students with disabilities and differences.

Teaching Styles Affect Instructional Success

Teachers have individual teaching styles reflecting their training experiences and competencies as well as their unique personalities. Some use a structured approach, others use an open approach, and many use an eclectic style. No one approach is deemed to be the most appropriate teaching style. In fact, all types of children have been taught effectively within all types of styles. Teachers, however, may be awed by the inclusion of diverse learners in regular classrooms with the impression that they will be required to change what they are professionally--their teaching style--to become something different. The key to teachers' roles and success for effective inclusion of students with learning differences is teachers' willingness to provide adaptations, adjustments, accommodations, and alternatives within their teaching styles.

Teaching Strategies for Successful Inclusion

Within any teaching style certain techniques may help teachers manage student learning more effectively. These techniques may include the following:

*Observe the student to determine how to teach. Assess the student's learning strengths, styles, and differences and the conditions of any disability or differences that may interfere with learning. Become an observer of the instructional environment in which learning is taking place.

*Teach to a student's strengths while remediating weaknesses and developing compensation skills. Use the student's abilities to teach things he/she needs to know and not allow the disability be a barrier to learning.

*Restructure a task when a student cannot master it. Change the way the task is presented or change the method of response. Use task analysis to determine what happens when a student is asked to do a certain task.

*Check understanding of the content of material or directions by following up with a specific question. Avoid asking, "Do you understand?"

*Repeat or rephrase what is being said in the classroom by varying the vocabulary and the mode of presentation or method of instruction. Provide on-going instructional feedback.

*Give both oral and written directions and provide both visual and auditory clues for directions and instructions.

*Be aware of auditory and visual distractions in the classroom. Even subtle ones can be very distracting to some students, such as sitting near a window or a pencil sharpener.

*Provide help through peer teaching or the buddy system. Provide reinforcement for newly learned or previously learned skills by allowing the student with differences to become a peer tutor to another student who is just beginning to learn a skill.

*Include all students in the classroom activities and projects. Minimize the differences and maximize the similarities during classroom participation.

*Match a student's learning style with appropriate selection of methods and materials. Use the learning styles and strengths of all learners in the classroom as tools for planning instruction.

*Evaluate students by their individual performance without lowering the standards for the class. Investigate evaluation alternatives to ensure success and not failure.

*Manage behavior positively, consistently, and assertively. Set limits, structure consequences, and follow-through! The use of logical consequences, natural reinforcers, contingency contracting, praise, encouragement, and recognition will help structure success for all students. Some students with disabilities and learning differences may need differential discipline considerations.

Steps for Adapting Instruction for Students with Learning Differences

Identifying appropriate instructional accommodations to help general educators serve students with diverse learning needs in regular settings is significant for educational success. All students share many common basic needs, yet exceptional learners exhibit certain characteristics relative to their disabilities and differences that can impact instructional success. The student may have problems relative to one or more of the following problems singly or in combination: ability, attention, achievement, motor skills, perceptual development, language and communication, sensory acuity, physical impairments, memory, adaptive, social, and emotional behaviors.

Teachers have within their power control over certain aspects of the instructional process to ensure success for all students, including students with disabilities and differences. To help teachers remember the various types of accommodations that are within their repertoire during the school day, the acronym, STEPS, is suggested as a teacher's mnemonic memory tool. STEPS that teachers can think about for accommodating learners include the following:

SETTING & SPACE

TIME, RATE, & AMOUNT

EVALUATION & Assessment

PRESENTATION & PRACTICE

STRUCTURE & SUPPORT

SETTING & SPACE: ADJUSTMENTS TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

*Provide preferential seating
*Seat near a "study buddy"
*Place near teacher for immediate assistance
*Seat near a good role model
*Place away from visual/auditory distractions
*Use study carrels or quiet areas
*Match work area to learning styles
*Keep desk free from extraneous materials
*Ensure barrier-free access
*Provide adequate space for movement
*Allow for flexible grouping arrangements

TIME, RATE, & AMOUNT: ADJUSTMENTS TO LEARNING PROCEDURES

*Allow extra time to complete written work
*Extend time for processing information
*Cue students to stay on-task
*Establish an individual daily schedule
*Modify the instructional schedule
*Determine the student's expected work rate
*Expect student to accomplish expected rate
*Reduce amount of work to copy from book or board
*Break work into shorter segments
*Reinforce completion of each segment

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT: ADJUSTMENTS TO MEASURING PROGRESS

*Oral testing/oral responses
*Small group/Individual testing
*Flexible testing schedule or setting
*Test retakes
*Rewriting tests/consider spacing and crowding
*Test for content & knowledge in subject areas
*Advance warning system
*Grading modifications based on individual goals
*Contracting for grades
*Bonus points or credit department grades
*Tape recorded tests
*Vary test formats: short answer, matching, essay
*Alternative response modes: points, writes, circles
*Self-monitoring/self-evaluation/student charting
*Curriculum-based assessment
*Regular parent-teacher-student-communication

PRESENTATION & PRACTICE: ADJUSTMENTS FOR METHODS & MATERIALS

*Oral & written assignments
*Raise "stimulus" value for motivation
*Peer tutoring: Individual & Classwide models
*Cooperative learning groups
*Advance organizers/outlines/study guides
*Structured organizers/mapping charts
*Learning & study strategies
*Mnemonic devices
*Notetaking assistance/notetaking strategies
*Rephrasing/redirecting
*Modify objectives, type or level of work
*Adapt readability level/high interest-low vocabulary
*Reading "Preview" strategies
*Task analysis/error analysis
*Vary materials: texts, audio-visual, technology

*Captioned films/interpreter
*Computer assisted instruction
*Assistive technology devices
*Adapting texts: highlighting, large print, taped books
*Math: calculator, tables, number lines, manipulatives
*Models, pictures, & other visual aids
*Vary input: lecture, demonstration, simulations
*Vary output: Oral, written, games, roleplays
*Vary questioning techniques
*Extra practice & repetition in different settings
*Parallel activity or curriculum
*Provide summary of reading assignments:written/taped
*Use a checklist for review/study procedures
*Consider accommodations needed for homework
*Adjust amount and type of homework expected

STRUCTURE & SUPPORT: ADJUSTMENTS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

*Positive & Effective Praise
*Behavioral contingency contracts
*Planned ignoring
*Time out/time away
*Immediate feedback
*Rules and routine clear and consistent
*Vary reinforcement menus
*Set clear expectations: "If you...,then you..."
*Verbal cues and prompts
*Signal interference
*Levels of privilege system
*Timer as a "ticking teacher's tool"
*Conflict resolution strategies
*Group contingency rewards
*Proximity control
*Logical consequences/natural reinforcers
*Student monitoring forms: homework tracers, daily logs
*Behavioral consequence mapping
*Self-management techniques
*Paraprofessional assistance
*Parent-teacher-student communication
*Collaboration, consultation & co-teaching

Applying Accommodations to Content Areas

The application of accommodations to specific content and/or instructional situations which may be utilized with students with disabilities and learning difference is presented in the following examples.

READING

* When reading disabilities affect content areas, taping the lesson beforehand helps the student to listen to the lesson as he/she reads it. The tape should be divided into small segments of reading passages.
* For longer reading passages, tape essential passages and highlight these in content area texts. Different color-coding highlighting can be used for key vocabulary, facts, and main idea.
* Encourage vocabulary development with students keeping individual "word boxes" or their own dictionaries.
* Advanced outline/reading guides assist in reading content texts.
* Primary and elementary students with reading disabilities need a "balanced" approach between direct reading and instruction and whole language approaches.

MATHEMATICS

* Allow use of learning aids such as manipulatives, calculators, number lines, table of math facts.
* Apply math concepts to life skills with "hands-on" math in the home and math in the workplace projects.
* Teach math strategies and concepts, not just memorization.
* Do "error analysis" with student orally to understand where the student may be making the error in the math process.
* Present the student with a smaller number of math problems at one time to complete.
* When presenting mixed computational problems, color-code the math process signs until the student learns to discriminate them.

WRITING

* Investigate computer assisted writing programs and other assistive writing devices.
* Notetaking assistance can be provided with use of a tape recorder, a notetaking "buddy", or extra time to copy work from overhead transparency, book, or board.

* Students are taught notetaking strategies.
* Students with severe copying/writing problems should have assistance "copying" math problems or questions from books before working them. Student should not expend energy on the copying!
* For spelling assistance the student can keep a "spelling word box" or individualized spelling word book at his/her desk. The student continues to add words to box/book he/she needs to learn.

SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES

* Key ideas from text or lecture are written on study cards for the student to use for review.
* Advanced reading/lecture outlines are provided in advance to student.
* Enrich learning concepts with audio-visual materials.
* Provide student with a pre-study list of key words and ideas to be found the chapter before a lecture or lesson is presented to class.

Planning for Instructional Accommodations

Techniques that support learning start with the teacher looking to the learner and the lesson to be learned and then determining an appropriate instructional fit. Teachers may find an instructional accommodations planning sheet helpful as a communication tool in developing accommodations within the regular classroom. Figure 1.0 presents a sample planning sheet for instructional accommodations.

The teacher also may benefit from using an Instructional Inventory to assess Student-Teacher fit. Such an inventory looks at the teacher's expectations for students in the classroom and compares those to the students strengths and weaknesses in those same areas. Areas for consideration in an instructional inventory involve what the types methods, materials, input/output modes for the instruction and evaluation procedures used in the classroom. Figure 2.0 provides a sample Instructional Inventory.

Additionally the teacher may benefit from using a textbook/material inventory to analyze requirements of the materials such as the pace of presentation, the format, and the reading/language level of the material. Figure 3.o presents a sample Materials Inventory.

In summary, there really are no "bag of tricks" for teaching learners with special needs, and the strategies presented are

helpful with all learners. These suggestions presented are by no means inclusive and teachers are encouraged to develop and share other instructional options for helping all students succeed. Techniques that support learning start with the teacher looking to the learner and to the lesson to be learned and then determining an appropriate instructional fit.

Figure 1

PLANNING SHEET

STEPS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS

STUDENT_____ DATE_____
SUBJECT_____ TEACHER_____

1. State in behavioral terms what the regular class expectation is for the class for this lesson.

2. Based on information from observations and test data, what may be the anticipated learning obstacles for the student?

3. What accommodations related to the following variables can be suggested to facilitate the student's success with the lesson objectives?

SETTING & SPACE

TIME, RATE

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

PRESENTATION & PRACTICE

STRUCTURE & SUPPORT

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Figure 2.0

INSTRUCTIONAL INVENTORY

STUDENT_____ DATE_____
TEACHER_____ SUBJECT_____ GRADE_____
SUPPORT TEACHER_____ TYPE OF SUPPORT_____

Achievement level: Reading_____ Math_____ Writing_____
Other assessment:_____
_____

Indicate the appropriate student and teacher key for each item.

KEY: + Student strength - Student concern X Teacher requirement

	STUDENT	TEACHER
MATERIALS		
TEXTBOOK	_____	_____
COMPUTER	_____	_____
WORKSHEETS	_____	_____
AUDIO VISUALS	_____	_____
CONCRETE/MANIPULATIVES	_____	_____
OTHER:	_____	_____
METHODS		
LECTURE	_____	_____
DISCUSSION	_____	_____
ACTIVITY/PROJECTS	_____	_____
WRITTEN PAPERS/REPORTS	_____	_____
ORAL REPORTS	_____	_____
COOPERATIVE GROUPS	_____	_____
OTHER:	_____	_____
EVALUATION		
ORAL	_____	_____
WRITTEN		
SHORT ANSWER	_____	_____
MATCHING	_____	_____
TRUE-FALSE	_____	_____
MULTIPLE CHOICE	_____	_____
ESSAY	_____	_____
OTHER	_____	_____

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Figure 3.0

MATERIALS ANALYSIS INVENTORY

STUDENT_____DATE_____
TEACHER_____SUBJECT_____GRADE_____
NAME OF TEXT/MATERIAL_____

Describe following components of the text/material:

Grade/readability level_____
Pace/Number of new ideas presented in a chapter_____
Size of print_____ Crowding _____
Adequate darkness of print_____color in materials_____

Are the following included in text/materials?

Preview/highlighting of key words/vocabulary_____
Cue words or phrases in margins_____
Questions for small sections of chapter_____
Visual aids (pictures, charts, diagrams, maps)_____
Taped/Audio materials to supplement text_____
Clear and sequenced written directions_____
Adequate samples of work presented_____
Enrichment activities presented_____

Other descriptions of text/material:

Given this information about text/material and information about student's instructional needs, what problems may be anticipated with the use of this text/material?

Are there accommodations for the text that can be utilized?

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